

# The Link

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF ARMIDALE

2021 APRIL/MAY

## Rod's rain

**ON SATURDAY, 27<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, THE Reverend Rod Chiswell was installed as the eighth Bishop of Armidale in a joyous but solemn ceremony, as the rain poured down outside. For many people inside the building, it almost seemed as though God was trying to**

**tell us something. That rain was a reminder of God's goodness and faithfulness to his people, and as Rod took the serious vows to serve in this new capacity, God's goodness and faithfulness was again evident in providing the people of the Diocese of Armidale with**

**yet another godly, self-sacrificing leader as their new Bishop.**

Inside, in this edition of *The Link*, we will look at that day more closely, but before his installation, Rod gave us an insight into his own life and ministry.

***The Link:* What did you do in the time between your election as Bishop, and the time when you actually began the job?**

**RC:** I asked people to pray for me and tried to get my head around some of the challenges we are facing with regard to recruitment, clergy care and the state of the Anglican church in Australia. Jenni and I have also had to say goodbye to our St Peter's church family and to grieve that as we prepared to make the move to Armidale in early March.

**What has been the biggest change so far to your daily life and ministry?**

The biggest change so far has been ceasing work on the coalface of gospel ministry in a parish and beginning to engage with a wider

network in the Diocese and the Australian Anglican church. So, conversations with other bishops, with theological colleges, and with people interested in country ministry have all begun. I'm getting used to more travel and more emails to respond to, and to using a hands-free phone in the car.

**What are you looking forward to most in your new role?**

I am looking forward to reconnecting with lots of laypeople I've come to know in the Diocese over many years, all of whom are now (albeit at a different level) under my care once again. I'm also looking forward to spending time with the clergy and listening to them to hear how they are going, so that we as a Diocese can support them better. The good news is that I like spending time with people, and I like drinking tea.



### Will you be making regular visits to the far edges of the Diocese?

Yes, I will be making regular visits to the far edges of the Diocese sometimes in person though other times via Zoom. Having served in Mungindi for 5 years when I began ministry in this Diocese some 25 years ago, I know it can get hard and sometimes lonely, and I know how valuable it is to have support in that situation when required.

### What are you hoping both clergy and lay people will tell you?

My hope is that people will be honest with me about how they are going and forthcoming about the things they need to stick at introducing all people to Jesus and helping them home to heaven. I'd like them to trust me enough to share the good, the bad and the ugly in their patch, so that we can pray and work together to keep growing loving, prayerful, disciple-making communities, that have Jesus' heart for all who are lost.

### What particular ministries you are passionate about and why?

I am passionate about ensuring that God's people are fed well with His word through faithful preaching right across our Diocese.

I am passionate about supporting clergy and equipping lay people to use their gifts to serve in the life of their church family to the glory of God for the growth of his kingdom.

And I am passionate about introducing ALL people to Jesus in our communities. That means people who are like us and those who are not as well. On average just over 10% of the population in our Diocese are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Further west some of our towns are 50-70% Aboriginal people. Some good work is already happening in reaching out to Indigenous people in our Diocese, but as I see it, we are just scratching the surface of what could be done if people can be encouraged to love as Jesus loved.

### Tell us your hopes/ideas/plans/prayers for the following:

#### REACHING MEN.

My hope is that we can continue to run Men@Glen really well each year and make the most of the opportunity to bring blokes together from all over the Diocese and beyond to be encouraged as men of God. That encouragement of course needs to be backed up by on-going input on the ground back at home in communities around the Diocese. The best way for that to happen is to support clergy to keep feeding men from God's word and modelling what it means to be godly sons,

husbands, fathers and friends. I won't be telling clergy what to do to encourage Christian men on their patch, but I will be praying that God will give them the necessary wisdom to keep helping men step up as they understand their responsibilities according to God's word: at home, at work and in the church family.

#### INDIGENOUS MINISTRY

As I said earlier some good work has been going on for some time in our Diocese in this area. Currently, St Peter's South Tamworth has a regular outreach ministry to Aboriginal people on a Wednesday evening and the capacity to train Indigenous church leaders, but I would like to see similar ministries started with training capacity in some of the other large centres in our Diocese as well in years to come. The Diocesan Indigenous Ministry Committee chaired by the Reverend Brian Kirk is currently working on a 'Now, Where, How' strategic plan and I hope we will be in a better position to convey some of that plan at our diocesan synod later this year.

#### CARING FOR PARISHES WITHOUT A FULL-TIME CLERGYMAN

The way we care for parishes without a full-time clergyman is something that I will be working through with the Archdeacons early on in my time as Bishop. Regardless of the broad strategy that we come up with, every situation will need to be considered carefully to see what people resources they have on the ground and what support is required. I think the concept of "tent-making" ministries, or ministry by self-funded retirees willing to serve for a season also needs exploring further, along with strategies for recruitment. My prayer is that we might be able to find solutions that enable us to continue to make and grow disciples of Christ in centres both large and small right across our Diocese.

#### EVANGELISM

Introducing ALL people to Jesus and helping them home to heaven will continue to be the main game for us here in the Diocese until Jesus returns. The parting command of Jesus to His disciples was to make disciples of ALL nations. The good news is that both clergy and laity right across our Diocese are largely already on this page. At a diocesan level we will continue to seek to resource parishes for evangelism through the work of the Commission for Evangelism and Mission, and through grants each year for evangelistic initiatives. My hope is that the number of mission weeks using students from theological colleges and Christian groups from universities will grow, and that parishes both large and small will take up those opportunities with funding help where necessary. Weeks like these not only put evangelism firmly on the agenda and provide great training opportunities, but they also bring people who might otherwise not hear the good news of Jesus into his kingdom.

#### ENCOURAGING YOUNG MINISTERS TO COME TO MINISTER IN THIS DIOCESE

I think that the future is bright for finding young ministers willing to come to our diocese. During my first week in the job, I visited Moore College and met with seven people already interested in coming to our Diocese and three others with whom we are just starting the conversation. My goal is to follow all of these people up each term when I visit the college. I also talked to a further ten students in a group meeting after lunch where I told a few stories then answered questions for over 40 minutes! My sense is that interest in country ministry is currently growing at Moore College. I guess I'll find out how it is in other theological colleges like SMBC and Ridley and QTC as time goes on as well.

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cover: Rod Chiswell and Archbishop Glenn Davies make their way through the rain into St Peter's in Armidale.

### What is your favourite Bible passage and why?

I have lots of favourite Bible passages really. I like 1 Corinthians 15:58 where, in light of the Jesus' victory over sin through his death and resurrection Paul says, 'Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.' I often pray in the light of that verse and that helps me stick at serving God and his church.

A verse that helps me get back on the horse when I fail and let God down is 1 John 1:8-9;

'If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.' It's such a great promise and it reminds me that being right with God comes only through his amazing grace to me in Jesus.

But probably my favourite verses are the ones my mum and dad wrote for me in the front of my very first Bible way back in 1972. 'Trust in the

Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight. Be not wise in your own eyes, fear the Lord and shun evil.' (Proverbs 3:5-7) I pray in the light of these verses most days asking God to help me to trust and obey Him, and to give me wisdom to serve him well.

### What would you like us to be praying for you?

I would love for you to pray that God would give me wisdom, love and strength for each day. Pray particularly for wisdom with words as they have such power for good if used well and for harm if used poorly. I'm aware that taking on the role of Bishop will possibly amplify my words, so pray that I will speak the truth in love in a way that people can understand and receive well. Pray also that God will help me listen to people well and respond wisely in the light of God's word. Finally, please pray that Jenni and I will settle in well at Armidale and that our daughter Georgia will enjoy her gap year as a Year 13 ministry trainee at St Peter's South Tamworth.

## Meeting Jenni

Rod Chiswell is blessed to have a godly and supportive wife in Jenni, who told us something about herself recently.



"I became a Christian as a fourteen-year-old, through attending youth group with my best friend. I had always believed in God and thought I was okay with God, until I heard a clear explanation of sin, judgement and God's grace in sending Jesus. It was a huge revelation to me and I made a decision to follow Jesus that night.

I first met Rod at, of all places, St Peter's Cathedral here in Armidale after an evening service. He was home on a uni break. My friend who was at the same uni said "Oh, there's a friend of mine from Sydney...let's go say hello." Little did I know what that meeting held for us! We've been married 31 years now. Our family is made up of Georgia who is 18, and Sam who is married to Clare. They have three gorgeous little girls.

I am feeling such a mixture of emotions as we embark on this new ministry — excitement, fear, joy, inadequacy, grief, and anticipation. It has been a real roller coaster ride leaving our church family after 13 years, as well as our kids and grandkids in Tamworth, to take on this responsibility. In all these emotions, we are convinced that this is God's will for us, and knowing He is sovereign is a great comfort and assurance in the turmoil!

Previously, I have mainly been involved in children's ministry. I've been working as a school chaplain for the past nine years in various small schools. I have also been teaching primary school

scripture and kids' church (Sunday school), doing one-to-one mentoring with some lovely ladies, helping organise women's outreach events, holiday kids' clubs, lunchtime SUPA clubs in schools, and Scripture Union camps.

I think my main ministries initially will be to support Rod as he finds his feet, and to get to know the clergy families around the Diocese. I hope to be able to be an encouragement to the clergy wives in their patches of ministry and their seasons of life. I know some of the challenges they carry that are unique to being a clergy wife. I am also really looking forward to visiting the different parishes to reconnect with old faces we know and love, and get to know the church family of the wider Diocese.

Rod and I have both lived in Armidale at different times in our lives, so it is not a complete unknown to us. I love the cold climate and the distinct seasons of New England so that is helpful. We know a few people in town, which I think will also help. It is great to be able to go for a walk or have a cuppa with someone. I think we will settle fine, once the boxes are out of our way!

I've been reading through the Psalms lately and I find them a wonderful encouragement and springboard for talking to God. So many emotions are expressed in them, which reminds me it's a great thing to share my heart with God.

I would love your prayers for us as we find our feet and work out our 'new normal' in this role. Pray for wisdom as to what to get involved in, and for building new relationships. Pray for God's care for Georgia as she embarks on life as an independent adult, that she would cling tightly to Jesus."

# O, happy day!

The day of Rod Chiswell's consecration was divided into two parts. The first took place at the Cathedral of St Peter in Armidale, where diocesan clergy and visiting bishops as well as family and friends gathered to witness the second member of the Chiswell family become a bishop of the Diocese of Armidale. Rod follows in the footsteps of his father Peter who was the Bishop of Armidale from 1976 to 1999.

Dr Peter Jensen, former Archbishop of Sydney was invited to preach, while the consecration was by the current Metropolitan, Archbishop Glenn Davies. The bible readings of the day were done by Rod's son Sam, as well as Rod's friends the Reverend Greg Harris, National Director of the Bush Church Aid Society, and the Reverend Terry Bowers, Senior Minister at St Mark's Freshwater in Sydney.

After the service of consecration, Archbishop Glenn Davies told us, "The rain did not dampen the occasion but refreshed the earth, and what a wonderful day to celebrate Rod Chiswell! It is a wonderful choice by the Synod to lead the Diocese and to grow the Kingdom of God in Armidale. Rod will be a faithful and godly pastor of the people. He needs our prayers. Everyone in the Diocese should pray for their bishop, that he might lead them with righteousness and grace. We rejoice in God's choice and for me as Archbishop, it was a great joy and privilege to be a part of this day."



*Jum Naden giving the welcome to country, prepared by The Bush Church Aid Society.*

Peter Jensen's sermon began on a sombre note, describing the many difficulties of life as a bishop, but ended on the glorious realisation that Jesus will be with Rod, no matter what.

To listen to the full sermon, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GV3pZWHlaww>



"What do we see when we see a bishop?" he asked. "On this day you see the glory of dress, of procession, dignity and honour...but in the life of the bishop there is, in my experience, great joy to see the work of God go forward, to see people come to know the Lord...there is satisfaction, there is energy, there is wisdom. All these things you may see and experience in the bishop and in the life of the bishop. But, as well ...there are relationships, as in every ministry, and every human life, but there are relationships which are special to the experience of being a bishop...Relationships that are often taxing...you used to be a mate, a friend; you are now the bishop, and subtly but surely the relationship changes. You will be involved, in a way that few are, in other peoples' relationships, you will be told confidences, you will be privy to things that others are not, in marriage, in parish, sometimes with the State. You will

see sin at work, perhaps in ways that surprise and shock you even though you have been a parish minister for a long time; and you will see pain and sickness as well. Yes, you will have seen all these things before, but when you are a bishop, these things come even more strongly, more powerfully. And then there are the responsibilities...and being a rector only partially prepares you for the multitudinous tasks that call on your time, your energy, and your wisdom. There is the whole area of travel, which is taxing... we should pray for our bishops - particularly our country bishops - for safety in travel. There is call for you to give advice...there are conferences to attend and to organize, there are other entities in the Diocese which will call upon you particularly at times when things are not going well, and there is the constant awareness that the decisions you make can impact many lives... but you have to make decisions, you have to take that responsibility, you have to be aware that your decisions often carry large implications.

There is one other thing I want to mention...there is aloneness. I haven't said loneliness, but rather, aloneness...You are never alone, but you are always alone. There will be those who advise you, there will be those whose counsel you seek. Thank God for that! But...there will be unpopular courses of action that need to be taken, there will be gossip and there will be criticism. These things will surround you and make you feel alone.

But what does Jesus say to you? He says, "All authority in Heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you, and surely I am with you always to the very end of the age."

The Lord is sovereign...He sustains us in chaos, and He calms the wind as He did with His disciples on the sea. You may trust Him always...Make it your aim to please him, because He is the Lord."



*Even the constant rain could not take the smiles from the faces of the clergy of the Diocese as they waited to enter the cathedral.*



*The cathedral was as full as COVID restrictions would allow. Old friends and ministry colleagues, as well as many lay people from the parishes were invited to share the celebration.*



*A solemn moment as his brother bishops laid hands on the newest bishop in NSW.*



*The new bishop takes his place on the cathedra, or bishop's chair.*



*A moment for the new bishop and most of the clergy in the Diocese to express their joy together.*



While there were many visiting bishops, none were happier or more thankful than Rod's predecessor Rick Lewers and Bishop Ray Smith who lived and ministered in the Diocese for a long and faithful time.



A welcome on behalf of the laity was given by Hugh McCowen, from Tenterfield. He quoted Philippians 1:3-10 and said, "We gratefully welcome you to your office of bishop. Our heart's desire is for the laity of the Armidale Anglican Diocese to bring you the same joy, fondness, encouragement and partnership that the Philippian church provided for Paul. Our commitment is to stand with you and our clergy in the continuation of Christian gospel proclamation as stated within Holy Scripture, emanating from this Diocese and travelling throughout our communities and the world. May we be an ongoing beacon of light to guide all of our Lord's weary travellers home. We look forward to hosting you and Jenni in our churches, parishes and homes. Let us be a constant source of edification to you both, pressing on towards the goal to win the prize which God has called us heavenwards in Christ Jesus."



The Chiswell family selfie.



The Reverend Kurt Langmead from Lightning Ridge spoke on behalf of the clergy at the reception after the consecration.

In a speech full of warmth and affection for his mentor, he reminded us that Rod was given a bible by his parents, and they had inscribed it with a quote from Proverbs 3:5-6

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.*



Jenni Chiswell was welcomed by Elizabeth Parker on behalf of the women of the Diocese.



Jenni commented that the consecration service reminded her of her wedding day in its solemnity. But, she pointed out, on that day, "I was the one wearing the frock!"



# Helping Men

Peter Smith from Tamworth has been involved in Men @ Glen since it began. For the past six years, he has served on the committee. While things are still not set in stone for this year's gathering, he filled us in on what the committee hopes will happen.



**“COVID-19 WAS JUST STARTING TO RAISE ITS HEAD DURING Men @ Glen last year. I guess we were a bit naïve and just advised the men not to shake hands and ensure they didn't stand too close. Then we ran our programme as usual. Plans for this year have changed a couple of times, but the main change is we are moving from our traditional March conference to the weekend of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> October – we have booked our speakers and can announce that Mark Calder will be speaking. Mark is the Bishop of Bathurst and his talks are titled ‘A Day is Coming’. We will be sending out information to churches in July.**

One of the men in our congregation a number of years ago when promoting an upcoming men's event said, “Wives, give your husband permission to attend this event” meaning tell him he has to go! There are a lot of things that hold men back from attending conferences and men's dinners. Rural men will not always prioritise men's events because there are jobs on the farm to be done. But I believe that we need to step out of the day-to-day rush and take time for ourselves to breathe, and a good way of doing this is to attend men's conferences like Men@Glen. Gathering with like-minded men whom you can talk openly and honestly with; having a quiet time with a group of men and praying for things that are on your heart are really important. The teaching is always targeted for men and the great bonus is being able to form new friendships each year.”

We asked Peter what men in churches can do for their friends who have got out of the habit of coming to church; perhaps because COVID

has disrupted their lives and routines. His answer was simple, but still not always easy.

“Just follow up those whom you haven't seen at church in a while. Drop in and see them or just make a phone call. Be a friend. In Lamentations 3:31-32 *For no one is cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love.* Remind your friend that even if they have strayed God still loves them and encourage them back to church this Sunday, don't give up on them, put them into your prayers.”

The last National Church Life Survey found that many people in the Diocese were concerned that men's ministry be prioritised. As a man involved in ministry to men, why does Pete think it is important to share the gospel with men, and to encourage them to grow in their faith?

“We all need to be encouraged and men's events can put a new fire in the belly of those attending,” he said. “It is also a way to bring a mate along to hear from the speaker in a non-church environment which is less threatening to some men. In the main, the men's events that we run at our church are at a pub or rugby club, and we try to get speakers who can relate to men across all levels of the journey with the Lord. That is why you need to choose your speaker carefully ensuring he walks a Christian path and will deliver a solid message. We can't do this journey on our own. We need to have like-minded people around us to help keep us on track.”

## COVID brings Opportunities

Sharon Kirk

**I'LL BE HONEST: I HAVE NEVER BEFORE** been involved in regular, intentional one-to-one Bible reading. I have often prayed with another person. I have even shared parts of the Bible with other people on occasions. But never before have I succeeded in reading the Bible regularly with just one person. I had heard about one-to-one Bible reading. I even had a book about it (which I had never read). But I just hadn't ever really tried it for any length of time. Until, through the restrictions of COVID, God gave me an exciting opportunity.

Twelve months ago, I was meeting with a friend weekly to do some craft together. Then COVID turned life upside down. We could no longer meet, so I began to pray about what we could do to keep encouraging each other. God kept bringing the same thought to mind:

read the Bible together. But how could we do that when we couldn't even meet up? So, I mustered up the courage to ask if she would like to read the Bible over the phone together. This was a new experience for both of us, but we agreed to give it a go.

I wondered if it would be awkward – just the two of us reading the Bible over the phone! Would there be uncomfortable pauses? Who would ask the questions and who would give the answers? Would it be a bit confronting reading the Bible with just one other person?

We decided to read through James and use set questions from a Bible study book. None of my fears were realised – it was an easy, comfortable, enjoyable and enriching experience. We both prepared beforehand and had lots to share about the passage. The conversation flowed and time passed quickly.



We were both greatly encouraged as we explored the meaning of God's word. With the lifting of COVID restrictions, my friend and I were able to meet together face-to-face again. We continued reading the Bible. When the end of the year came and other commitments prevented us from continuing, we were both sad, but incredibly thankful.

# No clergyman but lots of ministry



There are many small churches within the Diocese which have no paid clergy to run things. It is an ongoing discussion at every level...from the Bishop to those in the pews. But ministry continues. As the book of Hebrews tells us, *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever*. His gospel remains the same so our responsibility to minister remains the same...whether there is a minister in the pulpit or not. Jenny and Ran Mitchell live, worship and minister in the far north of the Diocese, in the Boggabilla Special District.

**“WE HAVE BEEN WITHOUT A PAID CLERGYMAN FOR FIVE years,”** Jenny said. “We were disappointed when the Avenells left, but we knew it was inevitable. The parish has always had times with clergy and times without. We have a very supportive Parochial Council and district. We had discussions and decided we would continue with North Star having a service every Sunday, and Boggabilla, Croppa Creek, Poppinguy, and Yetman, each having one service a month. We also were able to have five lay readers licenced by the Bishop though, sadly, one of those has left the district.

During COVID, we had to think outside the box. We decided to hand out prayer books and service sheets, as well as the little booklet, *Our Daily Bread* in our congregations and then we did a mailbox drop. At one church, we left a weather-proof box with them in it. As a result of that we have had a couple of extra people come to church, and others have become more regular. Most of our regular members managed

to watch some service each Sunday from within the Diocese. Others without internet used the Service Sheet and then watched Songs of Praise on the TV. The main thing that has changed is we are all really conscious of how important it is to meet together; how important fellowship is and how we missed that. We are very grateful for where we live; that we have an amazing God; that we have all been safe from the COVID-19 and that we have an amazingly caring and supportive church community and district.

At the other end of the Diocese in the Tambar Springs/ Mullaley district, Mark and Lesley Hathway combine running their farm with ministry to those around them. When their last full-time minister left seven years ago, the church just got on with life and ministry.

“We have found that all we can do is maintain the ministries that are currently running,” Lesley said. “In our case, that meant continuing Scripture teaching in three schools. One of those schools (in Prema) has since closed down so we minister now to seven kids in Tambar Springs and around 45 kids in Mullaley. We have lunch with the principal at Tambar Springs between lessons! Every now and then, we play cricket or handball with the kids, and we always turn up to prize-givings or sports carnivals. Our church is small, but we are really concentrating on being a part of the community. We have a few lay preachers, but everyone is so busy, it has been easier just to download services from neighbouring churches. People in the congregation do the prayers and we hear a sermon from Narrabri or St Peter’s in Tamworth.

I’d really like people to be praying for the small and remote parishes that we will keep on honouring and serving God, and that we will have wisdom on how to best use the resources we have.”

Since then, I have done a lot more thinking. I have finally read the book by David Helm, and I have even bought other books on the topic because I am convinced of the value of reading the Bible with one other person.

As Christians, we know that God’s word is our food; we need to be sustained regularly by it. Hebrews 4:12 reminds us that *the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart*. It is not like reading the newspaper. God works powerfully in us through his word and his Spirit. As we read the Bible, God grows and shapes us to be like Christ. That’s life changing business!

Yet, if many Christians are honest, despite the best intentions, Bible reading gets

sacrificed in the busyness of life. But as we share the word with another person, we affirm to each other that this is important. We spur one another on to love and good deeds. We inspire each other to press on in the faith. And we build relationship, within which we can share and support each other through the joys and struggles of life.

One of the benefits of one-to-one Bible reading is its flexibility. We can set a defined timeframe to suit our needs and commitments. It doesn’t have to be forever. It can be 15 minutes a week on the phone, or it could be an hour a week face-to-face.

One-to-one reading can also be an excellent tool for those who might find it difficult to be part of a larger Bible study group. For those of us who do attend a Bible study group, one-to-one reading may also be an important and rich

part of growing in God’s word. The closeness, safety and trust of the one-to-one relationship offers freedom to share openly and journey together in Christ.

I’ve recently been employed by the Armidale Cathedral Parish as the Trainer and Discippler of Women. One of my goals in this role is to encourage and train women to be reading God’s word and to be growing in their faith. One-to-one Bible reading will be one area that I’m keen to promote. I am definitely not the expert but I am an enthusiastic novice! My hope and prayer is that I might be able to read the Bible one-to-one with a few people for a period of time, who might then go on to read the Bible one-to-one with a few other people, who might then go on to read the Bible with a few other people... How exciting would that be?!

# Jum's hopes and plans

Jum Naden is an assistant minister at St Peter's South Tamworth, with a special responsibility for the Indigenous church which meets in Coledale. Like all churches, COVID-19 had a disrupting effect, but had unexpected benefits for St Peter's as a whole and Coledale in particular.

**"THE COLEDALE MINISTRY STOPPED FOR MOST OF THE YEAR** and a lot of normal ministry things changed," Jum said. "Because I had severed my Achilles tendon I was out for half of the year and was working from home doing a lot of the editing for our online services or other things that I could do from home as I was recovering.

I think one of the best things to come out of COVID was the way in which our church came together to make things happen. There were a lot of different things that needed to be done and people stepped up to make them happen. From going online, with service production teams, to pastoral care and thinking about how we run our Growth Groups. I was super encouraged to see how God was working within the life of our church during the beginning of the pandemic.

One of the most encouraging things for me came out of not being able to do Coledale gatherings. As the ministry had to stop because of restrictions, we had to think of other ways to do some sort of ministry. So we decided to do visiting once a month down in the area, just trying to catch up with some of the families that are connected to the ministry. The other thing was trying to figure out how we could start the ministry up again within the COVID guidelines. A block of land became available for purchase right next to where we usually have our front yard church gatherings and Rod Chiswell had the foresight to enquire about purchasing it for the church to use for future ministry. In God's providence, we were able to acquire the land and we are now making plans for it!"

The purchase of this land will mean the Coledale ministry can expand. "The land has been purchased with the hopes of building some sort of outdoor weather structure to facilitate future ministry in Coledale for years to come," Jum continued. "At the moment, we are in pre-approval for a D.A, and are speaking with the Tamworth Regional Council. There are a number of things that need to happen before we can move along with putting up a structure down in Coledale but Xavier Lukins, who is acting vicar here, is continuing to push the project forward with the help of some of the members of Saint Pete's who have expertise in this area."

Of course, we need to be praying about the plans for the new centre in Coledale, but in the meantime, ministry goes on.

"When we had finally purchased the land from Coledale, we were able to start having our outdoor gatherings again," Jum said. "We had five meetings at the end of last year, and things started as if they had never stopped. Having this land down in Coledale really does give us as a church, the capacity to be able to do things that we would never have had before when it comes to gospel ministry! I am really excited to see how God is going to use this ministry in the future and I'm praying along with our church that God would use it for his glory and that as a result many in the Coledale area would come to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour."

Jum grew up in a ministry family, and is passionate about Indigenous ministry Australia-wide. "In my mind, I would love to see people in Coledale turn to faith in the Lord Jesus and also for them to be



*Jum and Pip Naden at the GAFCON conference in 2018.*

equipped to be able to share the gospel with their family and friends," he said. "On a national level, I would love to see God continue to raise up Aboriginal men and women to go and serve him in their communities. I would love to see churches, like Saint Peter's, think about how they could be involved in outreach to Aboriginal people in their communities and also in what ways they could partner with Aboriginal ministers, and support Aboriginal ministries. Please continue to be in prayer about this.

I think that Indigenous ministry is important to everyone, not just Indigenous people because, at a purely theological level, the gospel is the power of salvation for everyone who would believe. Aboriginal communities in this country have been hurt and there has been much damage done. The big question that lies at the heart of this country is, "How do we make things right?" In the gospel there is an answer to that question and the church has the task of showing the world what this looks like."

We asked Jum what he would like readers of *The Link* to pray about over the coming year. "Would you please pray for strength and energy in the ministry for me and my wife Pip?" he said. "Pray that God would continue to guide and sustain us; that my wife and I would continue to love each other well and that God would keep us depending on him for all that we need. For the people of the Coledale church, please pray that God would continue to work in the community; that as the gospel goes out people would turn from their sin and put their faith and trust in him. Please pray that in the future we would be useful in gospel ministry; that God would use us for his glory and that he would continue to guide us as we seek to reach people – Aboriginal people in particular – in Coledale, Tamworth and the rest of the country for the Lord Jesus."

# Is God really in control?

With the disruptions caused to the usual youth events over the past year, Diocesan Youth Encourager **Tim Stevens** has a question to put to all those who may be feeling unsettled or discouraged by the uncertainties of the past year. We pray that as 2021 goes on, life will return to a more normal tenor and that the youth of the Diocese may once more be able to enjoy wider and deeper fellowship with each other.



**ONE OF MY FAVOURITE STORIES OF GOD'S INTERACTION** with humans comes in Genesis 37-50, and it centres around a boy called Joseph. If you're unfamiliar with it, I'll get you up to speed.

After the remarkable promises that God made to Abraham in Genesis 12, we see time and time again through the continual provision of children, marriages and families that God was still in control, and he was not going to abandon his people. If you read the story, you will quickly pick up that God's continual faithfulness was a miracle of grace. His dedication to them was always in direct contrast to their unfaithfulness to Him.

This brings us to Genesis chapter 37, and when you arrive at this point, it looks, again, like God's good promises were falling to pieces. Jacob, Abraham's grandson, is now the head of the family of blessing, and just after we meet him, we see that his home was one of disfunction. But for the parents among us, we need to note that the dysfunction in Jacob's house was not because of some meaningless sibling rivalry, but instead the outcome of a father who plays favourites with his kids.

Joseph was the favourite child, and as a result, all his brothers hated him. They hatched a plot to kill him, but an opportunity came to make some money, so instead of killing them, they sold him to slave traders. Then came the cover-up as the brothers tamper with the evidence to make it look like wild animals had killed him, while they pocket the cash. What was the outcome? A father who is devastated, deceived and destitute. Joseph is taken to Egypt, despised and then deported by brothers who couldn't stand him.

Joseph's story is one of my favourites because it teaches us a helpful lesson about God's ability to work in all of life's moments, which is useful given the uncertainty of the last 12-months. I am sure that Joseph had no idea what would happen when he visited his brothers on that fateful day. In the same way, there was an unexpected shock on that day in March last year when we learnt that lockdown was beginning.

Such moments of shock can make us question whether God loves us and whether He is in control. I know this because these are two persistent questions that teenagers have asked me over the last year. Where is God? Doesn't He care? Why doesn't He do something?

Such questions come from a place of genuine confusion for many Christians. After all, passages like Romans 8:28 assure us that "we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him,

who have been called according to his purpose."

This verse has to be one of my favourites in the whole Bible because it reminds me that God has the power to control all things. It also reminds me that He has the character to direct all things for His people's good.

But the challenge for us, and men like Joseph, is this: is the good that God works for those who love Him only ever achieved through good and comfortable means? I know you want to say no, but to admit that will mean that you'll have to accept that God might use the difficulties in your life to do something great.

Because God's idea of good and ours can be very different. We can see a comfortable and fulfilled life as the ultimate good, though God's perspective is more like 1 Peter 1:7. There we read that difficult times come "... so that the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed."

These are words that I am sure Joseph could give a hearty "AMEN" to at the end of his life. Over time, he grew to a place of prominence in Egypt, and (in a foreshadowing of Jesus) became a saviour figure. Then with all the power of Egypt at his disposal, in Genesis 50:20 we see him addressing his fearful brothers, and he says '... you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.'

Joseph's experience was not a pleasant one, and the difficult times in our lives are not enjoyable either. But we see in the life of Joseph that the words of Romans 8:28 are true. God is worth trusting in, even when life is tough. Even though we might not see Him, He is in control. His hands are never tied.

And having a God whose hands are not tied is terrific news because the good that God ended up working out of this bad situation is a foretaste of the forgiveness that he offers us through the death of His Son.

COVID has not been entirely fun, and the uncertainty that it has brought has not been enjoyable. But like Joseph, we need to be patient and open to seeing the good that God is, and has been, doing in this season. Till then, we take comfort from the truth of God's power and His character, 'we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him'.

Will you trust the God who works for the good of those who love him?



# Jum's dance

*Jum Naden and Rod Chiswell*

We met **Jum Naden** on page 10 of this edition. He has told us a bit more about himself and his own journey of faith as well as the long journey to the Diocese of Armidale.

**I GREW UP IN A CHRISTIAN FAMILY, WITH MY FATHER BEING** involved in ministry as far back as I can remember and both of my parents coming from a strong Christian heritage. It was when I was eight years old, at a national convention in Port Augusta run by the Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship, that I responded with repentance and faith to God's gift to me in Jesus' death and resurrection.

I have been always acutely aware of how the Indigenous church has operated and its need for well-trained men and women to be involved in gospel ministry to our own people. My dad is an ordained Anglican minister and I have a lot of family members and friends in ministry who have served faithfully among Aboriginal people for many years, and who have given me a unique insight into the way things have been for Aboriginal churches and communities. This along with the plain and simple truth that God uses people to take his gospel to the ends of the earth was the driving and motivating factor to consider full-time ministry.

I met Rod Chiswell in my second year at bible college at a Bush Church Aid Conference in Queensland. He was the guest speaker for the conference. He was friendly and had a chat to me and asked if he could have my number on the off chance that he was in Sydney and was able to catch up for a coffee! For many people in the Diocese, that is probably enough of a picture to figure out how I ended up here, but truth be told, I thought no more of his request and went back to Sydney focusing on study. But, lo and behold, I received a text from Rod asking to catch up! We had lunch together just to get to know each other and chat about what ministry might possibly look like for me after college.

In my third year of college, I married my wife Pip and the catch-ups with Rod continued. The possibility of coming to work in Tamworth opened up as he invited us to come and have a look at the ministry and

the work that Rod and the great folks at Saint Peter's South Tamworth had begun in Coledale. It was after that trip my wife and I seriously started to consider coming and moving to Tamworth. We prayed about it.

In our last year, Rod and Jenni were in Sydney and we had dinner together. After dinner, we had a chat about what it would look like to come and work in Tamworth and Rod handed me a job description about some of the things we could possibly do here. My wife was sold on the idea and was ready to sign up, but we prayed about it a bit more before agreeing to make the decision to move up. We finally made the decision, let Rod and the team know and the rest is, as they say, 'history'! I refer to this whole experience as 'the ministry dance'! Looking back on that time it's easy to see how God was using our catch-ups and meeting at the BCA conference to bring all of this about even if there was a lot of back and forth...a bit like a slow waltz!

Pip and I have settled in well. It's always going to be tricky finding your feet in ministry especially when you are fresh out of bible college and recently married. But the staff team at Saint Pete's is great and the church family is wonderful. There have been so many people in our church family who have welcomed us, and we are really thankful to God for that. In our first year (2019) one of our cars was stolen over the Easter weekend and last year (2020) the COVID-19 pandemic hit, I completely severed my right Achilles tendon and also had a lower back problem. Pip has enjoyed work as a teacher at Hillvue Public School and it has given her a tonne of opportunities to make connections with families in South Tamworth and Coledale. In some way we are still finding our feet here but in others it feels comfortable and a good fit for us.

Through it all, God has been good to us.

"...there's no discouragement shall make him once relent his first avowed intent to be a pilgrim..."

John Bunyan